

**Bárbara Belloc**

# **BLOWOUTS**

**2001/2004**

**English translation by Hillary Gardner**

**pato-en-la-cara**

**To my grandmother and mother. To my faithful friends.**

**For Teresa.**

**October 26, 1968**

**I received your letter the day before yesterday and was deeply moved by it!**

**[...]**

**I've had some dramatic visions: I see total darkness and man in the beginning of existence, like a primitive, discovering his own body, rediscovering the act, the world like some other strange, wild planet.**

**I see also how a dead person is so anonymous that the only truth in a cemetery is neighborhood, and that what gives him individuality is the tombstone with his name written on it. [...] Seeing this I become sad and I cry over the impossibility of anonymity through which we could begin our lives anew every single day.**

**[...] Because for me, the stones or the plastic bags I come across are a single thing: they all serve solely to express a proposition. If I still make something it is for this reason. I don't see why to deny an object only because we make it.**

**Lygia Clark to Hélio Oiticica: Letters 1964 - 74.**

The house on fire  
What little or lot there was:  
heart of ash

This afternoon I read Adorno as if I were reading the posthumous letters of my father, if my father had been a visionary, furious and celebrated. I read him the way a family secret is read out loud or a promise to keep one's word is broken. I look around: the amount of printed pages I throw into the garbage turns my stomach. Then I think: it should be inversely proportional to what I write, "or nothing at all." I read Adorno. And while I read I repeat: Adorno, Adorno, Adorno...like a purr. I read him frightened, so frightened that every couple of minutes I put the book down and wander through the house, frightening away the spiders with a feather duster. Then I return. To find a message seemingly directed to me and which, aside from the shock, I could understand as: a matter of common blood. (cf?) Meaning: I read Adorno as if remembering (as I remember) the chords from Brahms' Third Symphony, which my father swears I begged him to play over and over again in my infancy, along with Bartok, Gorecki, and Saint-Saëns, and not the sinusoidal fog and broken gears that indeed rocked the house day and night like a drunken boat on the sea of la musique concrète. Adorno: what an adornment! Do you mean to say that you didn't know music could wreak havoc? That music heard in the mother's womb has no effect on the fetus, which is nothing but all ears, an egg-sans-shell? Not like it matters much. This afternoon I read Adorno the way a biologist reads a pamphlet on artificial reforestation in the eye of an endangered jungle clearing in the Third-World—in this world—the moment the arrow of time sticks a sign to the tree trunk that reads: THE END. Or the way an orphan divebombs the photos of the dead pursuing something to kill the pain. Or the way a Japanese miner piles one stone on top of another, and another. Some speak of war, others of who will reign. The shadow of vengeance is stirring in the shadows. Here it comes. Adorno, Adorno, Adorno, Adorno: your name is a Diamond match struck on the border of a tiny plot of farmland in continual succession. The testament goes: "The only thinking without ideology is the one that tries to convey the thing itself onto the language obstructed by the dominant language." At night I sleep and dream of a meadow as a sheet of music dotted with cows mooing things I understand. Post-plunder: the well is dry.

(Potus)

I would pay  
I'd pay in leather

At night Difunta Correa awakes and roams around like a zombie does: her eyes red with hate for her captors, her hands raised, skull held high. She wears the same tattered sky blue nightgown, an old silver bracelet on her wrist, a swaying cross, a glass, intact, in hand. She ravages the valleys where man and beast seldom tread. Sometimes she howls and makes faces. Her steps leave no trace, and wither the grass she tramples. The idle-tongued swear that one night she came upon a poet walking in S's down an empty block, heading home, thinking of nothing, or verses. That, invisible, the dead saint passed by. That after that, the poet wrote a poem that got published in the country's most important paper—and his countrymen sang his praises. That as a result of his success, he got invited to participate in a popular national political movement. That after the first assembly, the group, which included the poet, took on the name purely by chance ‘The Difunta Correa Party’. One year later, Difunta Correa came in second-to-last in an election that had barely five thousand voters.

(One good deed deserves another)

/

The legless girl asks to pray standing. The President of the U.S. declares: “[To believe] in a peaceful world order in which nations can compete on an economic battlefield and not with tanks or missiles in bloody wars.” The legless girl asks to pray standing. The French Premiere asks for cheese and is given a bone from the left leg lost by the girl. The legless girl asks to pray standing. The Israeli Prime Minister accuses his British counterpart of having delivered, in the year following the fateful event that caused her to lose both legs, the girl to the Palestinians. The legless girl asks to pray standing. Meanwhile, the Chinese Politburo mobilizes its troops to the northern border as the people do not walk, they travel by train.

(Res non verba)

**Hosannah:  
Hidden ossuary**

The old man can hardly move, he's in hell, a shell of himself: all white and calcified, quite still in the depths of The Aegean Residence, with no pearl in his mouth, no coin in his pocket, his bones flattened like a manta ray's, an unmoving fan in an even more unmoving hand... Stiff, mute, he's waiting for a visitor; a dancer frozen in mid-air, mid-leap, the moment he's subjected to an x-ray, the effects of which transform him into the idea of a dead man caught in the fugacity of movement, just as the ribcage, kneecaps, femur, sacrum, start to fall to the floor. He's a nuclear victim, entirely worthy of a reliquary, waiting for the afterlife as if waiting for a ship that just set sail, as if waiting for a cure, as if waiting for love from one who doesn't love. He resembles a cistern. He resembles a water fountain empty of water, made of stone. But he can hear everything, just not what is happening: he hears the river running and the wooden crickets, the gurgle of the valve climbing to the surface, the crackling of the serpent's skin.

(Seaside souvenir)

Trance  
and turquoise ostracas

**Frag. 1**

**It's a dilemma: your company is sweet, but solitude is good.**

**Frag. 2**

Fair Kypris of the thousand garlands entwined in blossoms and bulbs  
like knuckles of the hand running over the white skin,  
pink skin of hers, tinted by the white moon over the black earth,  
sparing, cautious queen who does not fail and if she likes comes with wings:  
a thundering  
shakes  
my soul.

**Frag. 3**

Or just the opposite: how good is your company,  
she-fox of the henhouse, or moon in the poem.  
So it pleased me to feel, alone—  
in the dark—pleasure  
like a dilemma.

Oh Alabama...

**Wednesday-Thursday, last month:**

I arrive at a large, dark house surrounded by low, strangely barren woods. I climb, by leaps and bounds, a geometric wooden staircase—it all happens so quickly—and enter the parlor. You are there, as if waiting for me. I see the room in disarray, a fire lit in the stove, blankets, papers, a sieve, things strewn about, and I feel the heavy air of someone breathing while asleep, a deep sigh. I look at you, we look at each other, I ask you nothing, you ask me nothing. I sense something moving behind me and in passing see the door to the room, to the bed, open. What's odd is that behind me is the actress Millie Stegman, curled up in an armchair, wrapped in a poncho, just waking, rubbing her eyes, annoyed (or so it seemed). Then it hits me: you spent the night with Millie Stegman, she fell asleep, you got up and paced the room, you didn't go out biking because of the frost, and then I showed up, and then so did Diana Fernandez Irusta, my best friend from elementary school, looking for me. But why? I'm leaving with her. We go down the stairs and into the streets of Pompeya, out into a knockout morning. It's spring, the cherry trees are blooming in China, and so on. Giant white roses gleam on a balcony: they must be supernatural. The street is deserted; the street is a ghost of a different kind. Diana and I walk and walk, walk aimlessly around, walk endlessly perhaps. Then we fight. Out of nowhere a taxi approaches. The driver doubled over. The car's interior, dangerous and illuminated. A small screen flies in the sky. Diana disappears. The curtain falls. I arrive somewhere, I don't know where. Music.

**Sturm und Traum  
und Zeit—three clowns**

I'd wait for you my whole life if I had enough patience and love to be on the other end of the line listening to non-stop Commodore 64 renditions of the Goldberg Variations or the Brandenburg Concertos. For you I'd wait (by the way, how long do I have left: 39 years, with luck?) caught up in moisturized curls of cables, hands and feet bound, a lady of leisure—but that is not the case. You left shutting the door like someone who learned the lesson and shuts the book once and for all, like someone headed abroad, and I, your former countryland, I was left behind for a so-called "restructuring": parole parole parole.

## BLOWOUTS

In response to:

1. Theodor W. Adorno: "Cultural Criticism and Society."
2. Pier Paolo Pasolini: "Unhappy Youths."
3. Italo Svevo: *Senilitá*.
4. Sappho: as compiled in *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*.
5. Susana Thénon: *Ova completa* and herself.
6. Arthur Schnitzler: *Traumnovelle*.
7. Katherine Mansfield: "The Modern Soul."
8. Sigmund Freud: "The Dissillusionment of the War."
9. Erina: as compiled in *Poetae Melici Graeci*.
10. Ryokan: *Poems Composed in Chinese*.
11. Teresa Arijón: *Allibí* and herself.
12. Ezequiel Martínez Estrada: *Marta Riquelme*.
13. Marina Tsvetaieva: "The Truth about Poets."
14. Rudolf Otto: *The Idea of the Holy*.
15. Charles Baudelaire: *Jorneaux Intimes*.
16. Telesila: news of her person and also the *Hymns*.
17. Piero Camporesi: *Il Pane Selvaggio*.
18. Richard Dawkins: *The Selfish Gene*.
19. Angela Melim: *Mais Dia Menos Dia*.
20. Huang O: "To the Tune 'Soaring Clouds'."
21. André Pieyre de Mandiargues: *La Motocyclette*.
22. Haruki Murakami: *Sputnik Sweetheart*.
23. Anonymous.



jarre!

**BLOWOUTS**, by Bárbara Belloc, was published as PDF in Bs. As., Argentina, April 2004, and then revisited and abridged in Oregon, USA, February 2007.  
© Bárbara Belloc - [pato-en-la-cara / patoeniacara@gmail.com](mailto:pato-en-la-cara@gmail.com)  
The author authorizes its divulgation through all means.  
She also thanks you for reading it.